

THE AMERICAN LEGION

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

December 1998

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COMMANDER DELIVERS
VETS' MESSAGE TO CONGRESS
PAGE 36

Christmas At WAR

PAGE 20



PLUS

INTERVIEW

Rep. Gerald Solomon

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

Vol. 145, No. 6

The Magazine for a Strong America

December 1998

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THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.7 million members. These wartime veterans, working through nearly 15,000 community-level Posts, dedicate themselves to God and country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youths.



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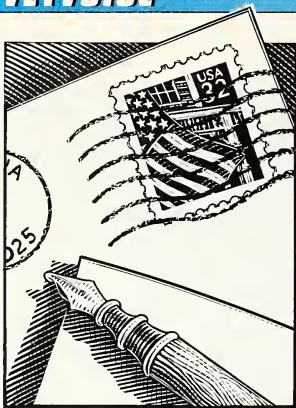
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Canal Challenge

HAVING grown up in the Canal Zone, I challenge Canal Commission Secretary John Mills' optimistic view (Interview, October). The canal is a major accident waiting to happen due to many of the original safety provisions being abandoned.

One such example is the SIP-7—one of the flood gates which is now inoperable. Another example is the protective guard chains, used to protect the gates from ship collisions, which were removed in the '60s. A limited gate failure did happen which resulted in flooding at the Gatun Locks, closing the canal for two weeks. A complete gate failure would take months to repair.

Will Panama stop the land clearing and resulting soil erosion, silting the

Madden Dam, Gatun Lake and its Chagres watershed areas? Will the canal join the Panama Railroad as a once-magnificent transportation facility that can no longer be used?

*Frank B. Turberville Jr.
Milton, N.C.*

Stop the Insanity

READ with deep concern "The Last Ditch In American Giveaways" (October). I do not feel the American people should tolerate this transaction. Instead, we should impose demands to put a stop to it. We spent \$400 million to build the "Big Ditch." Thousands of lives were lost to yellow fever and accidents, and now we're going to give it away to someone whose interests are in conflict with ours?

Come on, Washington, quit selling us down the canal. Americans have paid dearly for this property, and it should remain in American hands.

*Richard E. Wilkinson
Kendallville, Ind.*

Money Squandering

READ with disbelief Andrea Houk's article in the October issue. Assuming that the only blot on her record was a "little white lie," then it is shocking to me that the Air Force would so cavalierly throw away an investment in her education that probably exceeded \$100,000.

*Richard I. Mulvey
Ithaca, N.Y.*

Double Standard

YOUR article concerning the honor code of the Air Force Academy was very timely. For committing one lie in violation of the code, Cadet Houk was dismissed from the academy. Then there is the commander-in-chief, who lied under oath and lied numerous times in a deposition before a federal grand jury. It's time to restore dignity to the office of the presidency.

*Donald J. Roseth
Thousand Oaks, Calif.*

Honor is Timeless

AS A graduate of an Army service school, I find it's reassuring to know that the honor system is still alive and well, that honor and integrity are still held in high regard in the armed forces. As a veteran of World War II, I still live by these inherent fundamental principles I learned at Ft. Benning.

*Gerald L. Sampson
Sheboygan, Wis*

Supporting the Flag

IAM proud of what The American Legion has done to render support for the constitutional amendment, **SJR 40**. I just wanted you to know that I have also done my part.

I wrote a letter to the Long Beach, Calif., Press-Telegram. I'm passing it on to you to show you what it cut out.

'GIMME FIVE' CHALLENGES BLUECAPS

OFFERING friends or co-workers celebratory "high fives" is a practice that's gravitated from the sports world to general usage. To celebrate initiative in membership recruiting, National Commander "Butch" Miller recently announced his "Gimme Five!" competition, a new member award program available to every bluecap Legionnaire.

How's it work? Recruit five new members for your Post between Veterans Day and April 14, 1999—The American Legion Birthday Target Date, 95 percent—and take your pick of three great prizes. Recruiters can earn a unique, "Gimme Five!" necktie; a red American Legion computer mouse pad; or a quality Garland pen with this inscription: National Commander's "Gimme Five! Award, '98-99." Each recruiter can earn a maximum of four awards, officials say.

"This is a great opportunity to boost your Post's mem-

bership muscle while helping yourself to some great little prizes," said Commander Miller. "And the great thing is, this is open to any Legionnaires who want to take the time to improve their Posts by reaching out to fellow veterans in their community."

Under the contest rules, both the Post commander and Post adjutant must verify the recruiters' new members, sign off on them and then mail the cards directly to National Headquarters for processing. Staff have distributed recruitment forms to be filled out with the recruiter's name, Post, Department and address, plus the names of the five members recruited and their temporary membership numbers. For more information or forms, contact officials at your Post, Department or National Headquarters. □

WALKING IN A LEGION WONDERLAND

While we count our blessings, we won't forget our service members and others in our communities.



National Commander "Butch" Miller

PHOTO BY NANCY

IS THE SEASON for gifts, brightly-colored wrapping paper and street-corner Santas swinging handbells. It's a time when we're likely to be more kind to strangers and flash smiles to folks we pass on the street. We are surrounded by the warmth of love of our families in our homes, while outside the frost clings to window panes like a veil of lace.

Today, I'm thinking of the holiday season upon us, counting my many blessings and the precious gift of life. I ponder the modest and majestic birth of an infant on a silent night two millennia ago in a Bethlehem stable. I consider the courage of an oppressed people from long ago who today celebrate their triumph with Hanukkah's Festival of Lights.

And I'm also thinking much about the men and women of our armed forces—my own son, Craig, who is among them—deployed around the world, ready to defend freedom and carrying out a variety of peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Most of us understand what it's like to be far from our homes and loved ones at this time of year. I remember my first Christmas away from home, and confess that at the time I would have gladly swapped the steamy heat of Southeast Asia for a Minnesota snowball.

Let's not forget our service people during the holidays. If they're stationed overseas or even stateside, please take the time to write them a letter. Use the Internet and send them special e-mail. Send them a seasonal card or a note of encouragement. Let them know that they are not forgotten and that the serious work they perform is appreciated.

Also, don't forget the veterans with whom we shared foxholes, aircrew bays and bridge watches. Some will spend the holidays alone in veterans' hospitals and nursing homes. Others are without work, searching for shelter and food. I know your compassion and believe you will reach out to these invisible veterans, whose holidays will be a little brighter because you care.

Legion family members' devotion to their communities is present year-round, but it shines the brightest at this time. Consider some examples of the Legion Spirit of Christmases Past:

Richmond Post 63, Augusta, Ga., filled 75 boxes with cakes, ham, fruit, cookies and candy for needy families in their area. Legionnaires also purchased toys and wrapped them for the children of these families. Like thousands of other Posts around the country, Post 63 hosted a Christmas Party for kids and staged parties at local schools.

It's no sin that a parent or guardian does not have enough money to make a child's Christmas gift dreams come true. That's why members of **Post 134**, Clearfield, Utah, raised funds from a bowl-a-thon and trap shoot contest one recent year. The proceeds were used to purchase gift certificates so that some of the youngster's dreams could come true.

For most, the holidays are a time of promise and bounty. For some, though, it is a season of unfulfilled wants and need. The eyes of **Texas Post 163** in Weatherford were upon the children and shut-ins in their community. The Post sponsored a Christmas Party and provided gifts and fruit to the youngsters and 443 residents in a nearby nursing home. The Post also "adopted" two local girls and made sure they had presents under the tree on Dec. 25.

We've many reasons to be thankful during this special time of year. As we continue our journey in all seasons, let us always remember the message of a simple carpenter's son; that love, faith and hope are the greatest of gifts we can receive—and give.

From my family to yours, we wish for you a joyous and merry holiday. □



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TIME RUNS OUT ON SJR 40



Commander Miller meets with Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott to discuss strategy in bringing the amendment to a floor vote.

NOTE: JUNE 12, 1997

Miller said. "Senators on both sides of the aisle know full well where they stand. It's a shame that pure politics has obstructed the will of the people. I am very disappointed that Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), regardless of his position on the bill, was unwilling to join with Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), to ensure a vote on this issue."

Miller said it must be assumed that tight election races of Senators Patty Murray, D-Wash.; Carol Moseley-Braun, D-Ill.; Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.; and Russell Feingold, D-Wis., all opponents of the amendment, prompted "this obstruction of legislation" which has the support of 80 percent of the American people.

"You'll notice that the blockade was created by senators who are secure in their seats and not by those flag-protection opponents already hanging on for dear life in tight races," Miller said. "Clearly they are ashamed of their position—as well they should be—and they don't want their constituents to know where they stand on protecting Old Glory."

The House passed a flag-protection constitutional amendment on June 12, 1997. A two-thirds majority in the Senate would have sent it to the states for ratification.

"I hope the American people will return to Washington a U.S. Senate willing to do what the House did in 1995 and 1997: Approve a constitutional amendment that would return to the people the right to protect the U.S. Flag from acts of physical desecration," Miller said.

Forty-nine state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a flag-protection amendment, and results of a nationwide Gallup Organization survey released in September reiterated the reports of numerous previous polls: Nearly four of five Americans want returned to them the right to restore federal flag-protection laws that the Supreme Court struck down in 1989. Such laws had been on the books for more than 100 years.

"I am concerned that the very people who claim to be defenders of free speech are the same ones who use every political maneuver in the book to ensure that the voice of the people is not heard in the halls of Congress," Miller added.

"The American Legion and the other 134 national organizations of the Citizens Flag Alliance are looking forward to the passage of the flag-protection amendment early in the 106th Congress," said Miller. □

A handful of senators derails the flag amendment, but the Legion vows the fight will continue early in the 106th Congress.

IN THE end, despite an all-out effort by The American Legion, time ran out on the proposed flag-protection amendment under consideration in the U.S. Senate. As the clock ticked down to the final hours of the 105th Congress, a few opponents were able to block a vote.

"We are disappointed but not surprised that a few senators would block a vote on a bill that has the overwhelming support of the Congress and the American people," said National Commander "Butch" Miller, after the Senate's failure to bring the flag-protection measure to a vote.

"During the course of this campaign we have faced all manner of obstructionist maneuvers and we view this as nothing more than one more pot-hole on the highway to victory," Miller said.

Following the Senate's inaction on **Senate Joint Resolution 40**, the Legion pledged to pursue the flag amendment early in the 106th Congress, which convenes in late January.

A vote on the flag-protection amendment was blocked Oct. 7 on objections by Democratic Senators Bob Kerrey of Nebraska and Patrick Leahy of Vermont. They claimed there was insufficient time to debate the measure.

"The flag-protection amendment has been debated by senators for more than nine years,"

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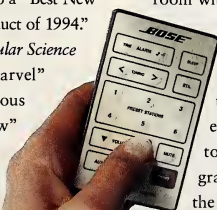
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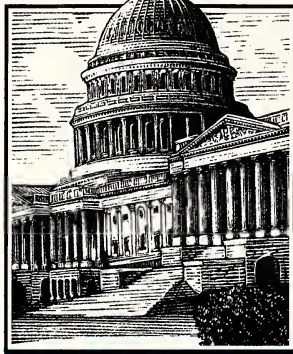
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By Cliff Kincaid

Grounded For Beliefs

THE EXPERTS agree: We need more pilots. Too many are leaving the services. Tell that to Lt. Cmdr. Kenneth Carkhuff, a pilot with an exemplary record who was given desk duty after questioning the morality of leading women into combat, a viewpoint the Navy says raises concerns about his leadership abilities.

The case dates back to 1994, and Carkhuff's cause was taken up by radio broadcaster Dr. James Dobson and over a dozen members of Congress. But several years later, and after more than \$30,000 in legal bills, he still is hoping—one might even say praying—to fly aircraft.

Carkhuff says he was prepared to lead his mixed-gender helicopter detachment into action if ordered to do so. But when he questioned the policy, citing religious concerns, he says he suddenly found himself penalized and targeted for being a Christian and was told he would have to go. His commanding officer wrote that Carkhuff's beliefs were "not compatible with further military service."

Once Carkhuff was on the way out, Navy Secretary John Dalton reversed course and ordered his retention, citing his superb record of achievement. But Carkhuff never changed his views, losing promotions and leaving him anxiously awaiting his fate. "I want to fly," he says.

In an interview with THE AMERI-

CAN LEGION MAGAZINE, he reiterates his belief that Bible morality rules out women in combat roles. What's more, "I'm not a dinosaur or a lone voice," he says. A graduate of the Naval War College, he insists that at least half of his fellow officers at the time opposed women in combat.

Trigger-Happy Response?

U.S. CRUISE MISSILE strikes on Afghanistan and the Sudan were justified by the administration under the self-defense provision, *Article 51* of the U.N. Charter. But former Regent University law professor Jeff Tuomala, who spent eight years on active duty in the Marine Corps specializing in the law of war, says the administration hasn't made its case that the facilities in Sudan or Afghanistan were a direct threat that required such a response.

If these countries were terrorist threats, he argues, the administration should have gone for authorization to Congress to use military force against them. This would have sent a clear message to state sponsors of terrorism.

While more facts might come out supporting the administration's case in regard to the pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, he warns that Sudan's criminal indictment and proposed trial of President Clinton as a "war criminal" could appear valid to some countries, especially if it can be demonstrated that the bombed-out factory was completely civilian in nature. The United States has resisted calls for an international inspection of the site.

It is highly unlikely that Sudan would actually get its hands on Clinton, in order to try or punish him, Tuomala says, but it is also unlikely the United States will ever issue an apology or pay restitution.

Tricks of the Trade

THERE MIGHT be a surplus in the federal budget, but another record trade deficit looms. "The deficit this year may top \$250 billion in merchandise," predicts William Gill of the American Coalition for Competitive Trade. "With the Asian markets, including Japan, collapsing all over the Orient, the trade invasion can only get worse as Asia jacks up its exports

to America." Gill, author of "Trade Wars Against America," warns that fast-track trade legislation will only make the situation worse.

War Over Taiwan

PRESIDENT CLINTON says the United States doesn't support independence for Taiwan, considered by China a renegade province. But if Taiwan does declare statehood, an increasingly likely development over time, our country might be drawn into a war with the People's Republic, a Pentagon study suggests. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, for one, has bluntly told Chinese officials the United States will defend the island, a position that Ted Carpenter of the Cato Institute describes as "reckless."

Carpenter says, "There is simply no adequate strategic reason for the United States to risk war" to defend Taiwan. Instead, he adds, the United States should increase arms exports to Taiwan so it can defend itself. This includes letting the Taiwanese buy attack submarines, sophisticated air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles and helping the island develop an anti-ballistic-missile system.

War Crimes

ON AN ADVISORY mission in 1991, two American servicemen, David H. Pickett and Earnest Dawson Jr., were gunned down during El Salvador's civil war. Their accused killers were identified, arrested and jailed. The accused were freed when peace was signed and amnesty given members of the warring factions. Pickett's father, retired Col. Edward F. Pickett, isn't the only American who thinks that justice still has to be done.

Reps. Ed Bryant of Tennessee, Harris Fawell of Illinois and Ron Lewis of Kentucky have introduced a measure to pressure the administration to deal with crimes against American military personnel abroad. It urges presidential pressure on El Salvador to extradite the accused killers.

House Resolution 314 laments the "inability of the United States to meaningfully address the murder of two members of the United States Armed Forces." □

The Sea of Cortés Discovered

As the demand for destination-oriented travel continues to grow, traditional tourist spots like Mexico have begun to focus on undeveloped regions and more culturally intensive itineraries. One such itinerary offers a combination of beautiful beaches, rare wildlife and historical cities.

Seven-night roundtrip cruises, exploring the Sea of Cortés, sail north from Cabo San Lucas along the Baja Peninsula. Eleven-night cruise-develops include an excursion to Copper Canyon, a remote area four times the size of the Grand Canyon, located on Mexico's mainland.

Mexico's Baja Peninsula

The Baja Peninsula, jutting out from mainland Mexico south of California, offers a myriad of vistas, rugged mountains, sandy beaches, offshore islands and spectacular rock formations, best viewed from the deck of a small cruise ship. Small ships, holding no more than 100 guests, travel close to the shoreline, negotiating narrow waterways. The ships' launches, kayaks and snorkeling

gear also provide up-close access to the rare wildlife found along the Peninsula.



Small, shallow-draft vessels make the remote regions of the Sea of Cortés accessible.

New to the Sea of Cortés for 1998-99 season is Seattle-based

Cruise West. The American-owned, family-operated small-ship cruise line brings the *Spirit of Endeavour* and the *Spirit of '98*, as well as 50 years of experience, to these waters beginning in December, 1998. Both vessels have American crews and American standards of cuisine, safety and hygiene.

Cruise West's Sea of Cortés Cruises

Cruise West's seven-night cruises trace the Baja coastline from Cabo San Lucas to Santa Rosalia, a small, colonial-style community 400 miles north, exploring both land and sea. By sea, guests visit offshore islands,

wildlife sanctuaries, and out-of-the-way beaches and bays for snorkeling, swimming and hiking. By land, they tour Baja's desert and mountain scenery and visit small ports with histories and cultures that have evolved separately from cities on the Mexican mainland.

Besides Santa Rosalia, ports of call include Múlege, Loreto and La Paz. Each is widely separate—both in distance and spirit—from tourist cities on the mainland. These towns feature colonial-era architecture, cobblestone streets and plazas, and early missions, established in the late 17th century.

The Copper Canyon

Every Cruise West Sea of Cortés cruise can be combined with a 4-night land excursion to Copper Canyon. Four times larger and 300 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon, Copper Canyon is accessible by the South Orient Express, aboard domed railcars which travel from sea level to almost 8,000 feet,



through stunning vistas and spectacular switchbacks. Deep in the heart of the Canyon live the Tarahumara Indians, one of the most isolated cultures in North America. Guests on the Copper Canyon cruise-tour have the opportunity to visit with the Tarahumara.

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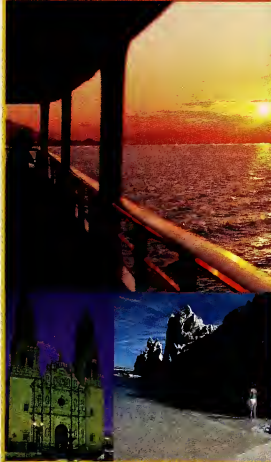
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CHANGE IN HABIT

By Julie A. Rhoad

THE DIAGNOSIS of adult-onset (Type II) diabetes 35 years ago prompted Jack Boyd to change his lifestyle dramatically. He walks one mile every day, now using a local shopping mall, and labors three times a week on an exercise machine. He eats in moderation and watches his daily intake of dietary fats and sugars.

Unlike his diabetic father and grandmother, Boyd has controlled his life-threatening disease for three and a half decades through diet and exercise. "You just work out a little routine and go with it each day," says the 75-year-old Indianapolis Legionnaire. He also credits his regimen with helping maintain his weight. It was 175 pounds when the diagnosis was made; since Boyd has been on insulin, his weight has increased gradually to a bit over 200.

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. Of the 16 million Americans who suffer from diabetes, 14.9 million share Boyd's diagnosis of adult-onset diabetes, or Type II diabetes. The other 1.1 million cases are juvenile diabetes.

The most common form of diabetes, Type II affects nine out of 10 diabetic Americans. It is known as adult-onset diabetes because it customarily targets people over age 45.

With Type II diabetes, the body cannot properly use insulin. Glucose is a form of sugar produced when food is digested. When burned, glucose provides energy to the body. Insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas, metabolizes glucose. Glucose cannot be burned without insulin. With Type II diabetes, the body's insulin becomes less effective in controlling glucose.

One in every 20 Americans has diabetes. Those with the following characteristics are at an increased risk of developing Type II: over age 45; overweight; high blood pressure; high cholesterol; member of a high-risk group, such as African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians or Native Americans; women who had gestational diabetes or delivered a child weighing more than nine pounds; and a history of diabetes in the family.

Indeed, genetics and obesity typically play the largest role in the disease's prevalence. According to statistics from the American Diabetes Association, nearly 85 percent of diagnosed Type II diabetics are overweight.

Typical symptoms include increased urination and thirst. Other secondary symptoms such as deteriorating eyesight, can be mild and therefore difficult to recognize. Many confuse diabetes symptoms with other health-related problems, explains Dr. Bruce Zimmerman, president-elect of the American Diabetes Association. He says, "People visit their doctor having had a symptom of a diabetic complication, like visual loss, a circulatory problem, numbness in your

feet, or impotence, and then discover they have diabetes."

Left untreated, Type II can cause more severe health-related problems such as kidney failure, heart disease, amputation, stroke and loss of vision. Diabetes is the top cause of adult blindness in North America.

A big problem with Type II diabetes is that individuals can have the disease 10 years before symptoms emerge. In the early stages, blood sugar increases modestly, causing symptoms to be mild to non-existent. The American Diabetes Association recommends that everybody over 45 get screened, and if their screening is negative then they should get screened again every three years. The diagnostic cut off is a fasting blood sugar greater than 126; a reading of 80 to 120 is normal.

The good news is that Type II diabetics can live long, healthy lives by learning to control their disease through exercise and diet. Dr. Zimmerman explains, "a simple exercise like a good brisk walk for a half hour at least five times a week is very helpful." Modification of eating habits is important, too. "Most people think this means not eating sugar, but that isn't what we mean when we say a 'diabetic diet.' We mean restricting the calories in the diet and restricting dietary fats." Oral medications and insulin also are available to help the more severe cases.

Even better news is the fact that Type II diabetes can be delayed or prevented altogether by incorporating a healthy lifestyle now. Losing weight, following a healthy diet, maintaining sufficient exercise and visiting a doctor regularly can halt adult-onset diabetes before it starts.

Dr. Bernstein recognizes that a healthy lifestyle change might be difficult for diabetics, but says it is worth the small sacrifices. "Since we have people living into their 80s, 90s and 100s, their quality of life can be severely compromised by slowly developing diabetes." Jack Boyd recognizes that fact all too well.

"If I hadn't been diagnosed years ago, I wouldn't be here today."

Julie A. Rhoad, a former assistant editor of this magazine, is a freelance writer specializing in health issues.



HIT THE TRAIL Jack Boyd steps out on a brisk walk, an important part of the exercise routine that keeps his adult-onset diabetes under control.

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DAY of INFAMY PEARL HARBOR

"... The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces.

I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost...

... Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

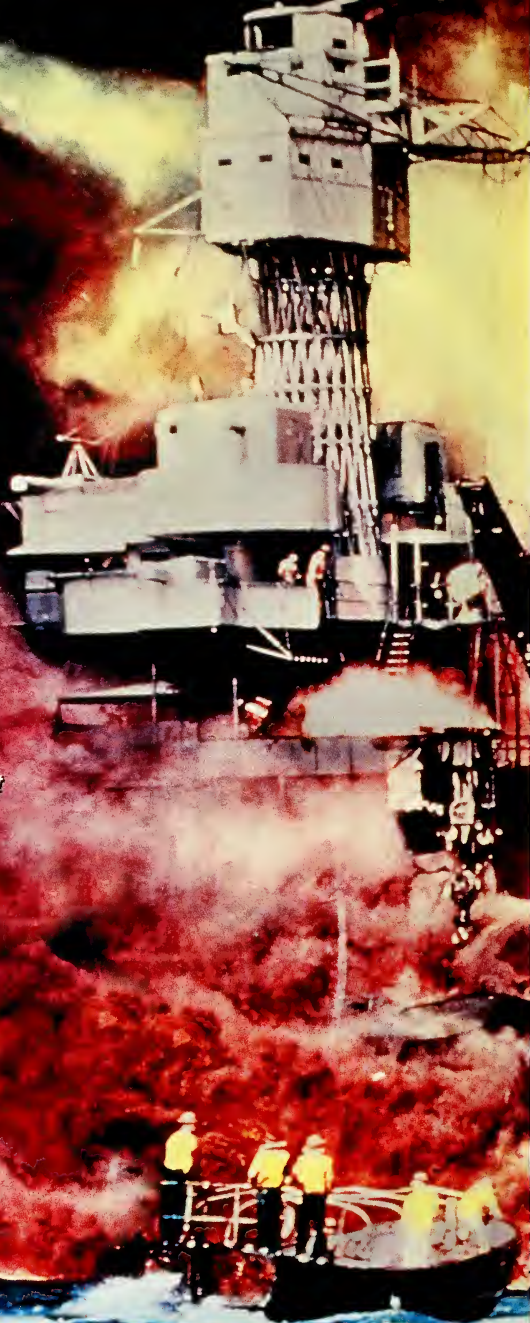
And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has therefore undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation...

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory...

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger. With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God."

— from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's declaration of war, Dec. 8, 1941



USS West Virginia aflame in Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941.

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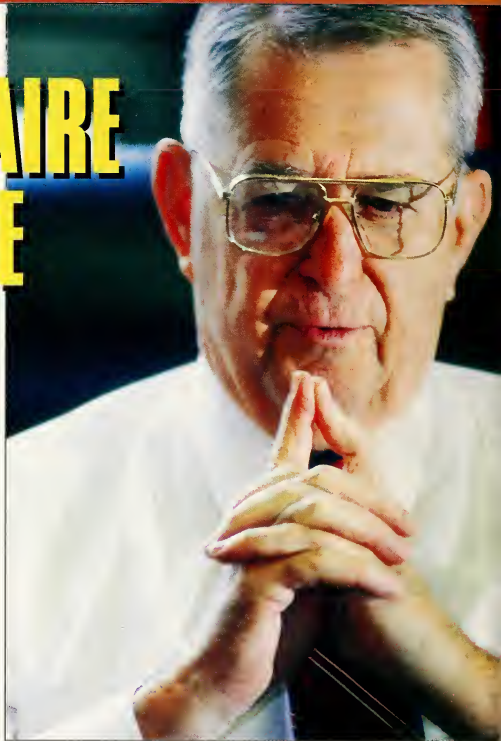
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*Strengthening our nation,
securing veterans' rights
and protecting Old Glory
are the principles that
have guided this soon-
to-retire lawmaker.*



BREAKFAST—two slices of toast and a glass of juice—sits neglected on the credenza in Gerald Solomon's office as he works the telephone. "Tell Newt I'll be there for the vote this afternoon," he says. An aide pops his head into the office and points to his watch. "Yeah, I'm watching the time. Thanks."

He signs some documents, finishes his telephone conversation, glances over a fax that has just been handed to him, and glances hungrily at the uneaten toast as he steps from behind his desk, all seemingly in one motion. "Hi, glad you could make it," he says, offering his right hand. Just a typical morning in the life of the U.S. Representative of New York's 22nd congressional district.

Solomon, a Republican and self-described soldier of the "Reagan Revolution," has served in the House of Representatives since 1978. Much of his focus as a lawmaker has been on two key areas: building a strong national defense and ensuring veterans receive fair benefits and services. In recent years, he has carried the banner on behalf of the flag-protection amendment, which he helped introduce and successfully steered through his chamber in 1995 and 1997.

Solomon, a Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War,

chairs the powerful House Rules Committee, which controls the flow and shape of all legislation that goes to the floor. He recently was interviewed by Joe Stuteville:

AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE: You came to the House of Representatives in 1978. How has Capitol Hill changed the way it's done business in those two decades?

REP. GERALD SOLOMON: A lot of ways. Back in those days, about 70 percent of the members of the House and Senate were military veterans. What's changed for the worse is that today, that figure has dropped to less than a third. While being a veteran certainly should not be the sole criterion for serving in Congress, it's important to understand one of our most important jobs in Congress is to provide for and maintain a strong national defense, backed up with adequate veterans' benefits to help attract the best young men and women into our all-volunteer military. We made some gains throughout the 1980s, but I fear we're moving back to the weakened kind of military we had during the 1970s.

Q. You've described yourself as a "doctrinaire conser-



RONALD REAGAN

vative." Just what is that?

A. It's a Ronald Reagan conservative, and you just don't have to be a Republican to sign aboard [laughs]. A doctrinaire conservative believes in a strong national defense, having a respected foreign policy and fiscal responsibility to shrink the size and the power of the federal government and return [that power] to the states and local governments where it belongs.

A lot of people mistakenly believe the United States government is a federal democracy. If you read our Constitution closely, you will see that we are a republic of states formed to provide a common defense. That really should be the main priority. The federal government is too big, and we've taken away the rights of the states.

Q. In 1995 you challenged Newt Gingrich for Speaker of the House and ultimately you ended up as chairman of the House Rules Committee. In hindsight, do you think this worked out for the best or do you believe you might have affected more change and leadership had you been the Speaker?

A. Newt and I are soul mates on most issues. We hold virtually the same philosophies of how government should operate. Our differences are mainly in style. That was the reason why I challenged him. The truth is, Newt is an outstanding Speaker. He could have carried a grudge against me, but he didn't, and I ended up as the Rules Committee chairman.

Q. You've been described as the "pit bull of the House," not shy of confronting your colleagues on issues such as the flag-protection amendment and gun control. Do you think that approach has helped or hindered your career?

A. I think it's helped. People learn fast that you're a fighter and that you're not going to just put your finger in the air and see what direction the wind is blowing. Sometimes being loud and combative is not the politically smart thing to do, but on the other hand, if you're debating Jerry Solomon on an issue that he's passionate about, you're going to know where he stands.

Q. Former Speaker Sam Rayburn once advised young congressman, Lyndon Johnson, "If you want to get along, you have to go along." In what ways—

A. —See, I don't entirely agree with that.

Q. Fair enough, but isn't compromise the reality in politics, whether it's local or in Congress?

A. If you have strong beliefs, it's hard to give in. You want it all. But I had to learn that there are times when you do have to sit down and work out differences; you have to find common ground with your fellow lawmakers. The tough thing is compromising, and I've had to do that on occasion.

Q. There seems to be a growing distrust among citizens of their elected lawmakers—that Congress is ineffective and that members in both houses don't listen to their constituents. What do you say to these criticisms?

A. You have a lot of good people in this Congress who have a lot of good intentions and want to serve their people well. The problem often seems to be that some members of Congress are concerned only with keeping their job and can't say 'no' to anyone. As a result, they say 'yes' to everyone and that's how Congress got itself messed up in a sea of red ink.

You have to keep members of Congress focused on the issues through continuous grass-roots work. That's what has made the flag-protection amendment campaign so successful, and I commend The American Legion for taking this approach on this issue. Without the Legion's strong commitment we would never have succeeded [in getting the amendment passed in the House twice]. □

LIFE BEYOND THE HILL

WHEN the 106th Congress convenes next month, Gerald B. H. Solomon won't be counted among the ranks of lawmakers. Solomon is trading his title of "Congressman" for "Private Citizen."

"My wife says she's worried that when I retire from the House, I'm going to go out and find another career in politics, and I guess that's true to some extent," Solomon says with a laugh. "I plan to do some consulting work and play a strong role helping nominate a member of my party who can win the presidential election in 2000."

In his 20-year career on Capitol Hill, Solomon says he and his wife, Freda, have had only five days of vacation. "I think that literally shocked me into the decision to retire," he admits. "Also, I've had two serious bouts with cancer, and although I'm healthy now, these situations served as a wake-up call for Jerry Solomon."

"I think it made me realize that I need to spend more time with my wife, children and grandchildren. Your family has to be your priority."

—Joe Stuteville

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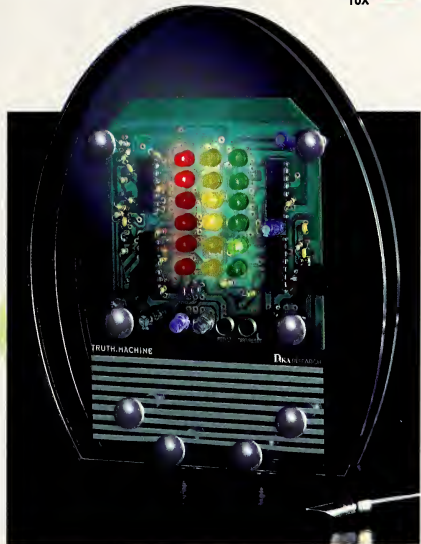
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Christmas At War

American service members have always found a way to celebrate Christmas—even in meager circumstances.

WAR'S dangers and toil have always made the Christmas promise of peace and joy

more poignant and appreciated. From the late meal on Hessian rations gained by George Washington's Christmas night crossing of the Delaware, to the West-

ern Front "Christmas Truce" of 1914, those who bear arms have always found ways to renew the spirit against the backdrop of war.

Our readers submitted remarkable and moving memories of the Christmases they've kept while in uniform, sharing the spirit of holiday seasons past.

COLOR TINTING BY J. LORET/PAVING COLOR GRAPHICS



Imagination

TONY VALENTINO, a former Marine staff sergeant, writes that he cherishes the memory of Christmas 1944 as a special tribute to his wife, Margery, who died in July 1997.

"I spent my nineteenth and twentieth birthdays overseas and



Wartime meant no commercially produced Christmas ornaments in 1944. But Margery Valentino, a bride of two months, made decorations of tin cans. She and Tony are shown hanging them on their first Christmas tree.

Talent & Love

came back to the states in late 1943. After recovery in Oak Knoll Hospital and Great Lakes Naval Hospital, I was sent to Quantico, Va."

There, in early 1944, Valentino met Margery Hunt, a PFC just out of boot camp. They married Oct.

21 in Washington, D.C.

"I was getting ready to ship out again, and Margery wanted to have a Christmas tree [in our one-room quarters off base]. She made ornaments from tin cans from her mess hall."

"As a cook at the base, Margery saw more tin cans than Popeye on a good spinach day. The tin got cut into stars, snowflakes, flowers and all the

Yuletide patterns," Valentino recalls. "Those ornaments rusted and got lost over the years (though bought ornaments never did shine as brightly), but the memory of the love behind them is always in my heart. Who can say why certain things happen? In my case, I met a special lady while in the Marine Corps [and she made] the Christmas of 1944 our most memorable."



Impressed by his charges' Christmas spirit, Lt. Kubo (in front of the homemade Christmas tree with some of his guards), a non-Christian Japanese, joins the prisoners' festivities in the British barracks. (Maj. Gordon, while at the party, is not in this picture.)

Christmas Brings a Touch of Freedom

RICHARD M. GORDON, a retired Army major and a Bataan survivor can recall the difference the Christmas spirit made to some prisoners of war in 1944.

It was "...our last Christmas in captivity. We had no idea of how we would ever live to see Christmas 1945. The Japanese had assured us that in the event of an invasion, we would all be put to death. We had no reason not to believe them, as we saw no other way for the war to end."

That Christmas was Gordon's third in POW Camp 2-D at Mitsuishima, Japan, and the previous two were completely without any feeling of Christmas.

"In 1944, however, we decided to celebrate Christmas, even if it were to be our last one. Our Jewish doctor, Alfred Weinstein, conducted carol singing and read passages from the Book concerning Christmas," Gordon remembers.

"Impressed by our Christmas spirit,

our Japanese camp commander, one Lt. Kubo, ordered the release of Red Cross packages that had been in a warehouse for over two years. Each prisoner on Christmas Eve received a full box of American food. What a treat! No one slept that night, but surely the spirit of Christmas was as prevalent in that camp as if we were free men," Gordon wrote. "It is a Christmas I remember every Christmas...A most memorable time."



Cpl. Francis Carpenter (left), now of Rescue, Calif., poses for a photo with a fellow member of his transportation unit, Sgt. Westley Holden.

Korean Yule Train on Track

NORTH KOREANS almost took the city of Kyong Ju, South Korea, in the months before Christmas 1950. Cpl. Francis Carpenter had been assigned to help keep the railroad junction in the community working. But from September until December, after the enemy had been thrown back, things were quiet. At Christmastime, however, train traffic through the town began to pick up, and Carpenter found himself busily servicing train engines with coal and water.

"Christmas Eve found us as busy

as it was possible to be," he wrote. "The railroad station was filled with freight cars beyond capacity. There were thousands of soldiers in the station. Our railroad courier had not yet made it as far as our station. This meant no mail or Christmas dinner, except our rations. We had an old Korean lady cooking for us. She was Catholic, and I had promised to have my mother send me a Catholic rosary for her. The rosary, our mail and Christmas dinner all showed up before midnight."

In the Infantry, It Was Just an Average Day

A SMALL CHRISTMAS TREE on a tent pole marked the holiday in Vietnam for Charles Wilke.

"By Christmas 1968, I had been in Vietnam two months and had pretty much adjusted to the heat that had, when I first got off that plane, overwhelmed me. Quite different from what

I was used to growing up, in Cincinnati," he says. "Periodically, I would receive packages from home, and to my surprise, one of them contained a small Christmas tree with all the trimmings plus a musical nativity scene."

Wilke was an RTO-radio telephone operator with D Co. 2nd Bn., 1st Inf., of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, and they moved almost daily. One day might find them at L.A. Sooner, a fire support base, the next "on the road," protecting Highway 1 between Chu Lai and Da Nang.

"Two men would put their ponchos together each night to form a two-man tent, so on mine, I put my Christmas tree. I gave the nativity scene to a young Vietnamese girl, mainly because with 70 pounds of ammo, radio, food and equipment, I didn't need any more weight."

There was no church service, no caroling, no family gathering nor ham and turkey on a large table for Wilke's 1968 Christmas.

"Come to think of it," adds Wilke, "it was pretty much like any other day in the life on an infantry soldier in combat. But...for the freedom we gave, to as many or as few as it was, I'd do it all over again."



On the road to Da Nang, a Vietnamese girl got a musical nativity scene.



Gathered at Charles Wilke's tree are (from left) Willie Johnson, Geisler, Sagers, Lt. Mike Holroyd and Jim Haen.

Hawaiian Samaritans

THE POWER of church and prayer played an important role during World War II.

"People flocked to churches to pray for loved ones in the service. My buddy, Willis Lankenau, and I were in Pearl Harbor on Christmas of 1944. To celebrate, we decided to attend church services, then head for the local YMCA where they would have a buffet dinner for servicemen," recalls Clemence M. Berent of Chicago, Ill.

As Berent and Lankenau were leaving the church, a man and his wife invited them to Christmas dinner.

"There was a limo waiting, and we drove to their home on Diamond Head...a beautiful home nestled among palm trees. We relaxed on the patio

while the host served mai tais. Dinner was ready, and we went in to eat," says Berent.

The couple had three children, two boys and a girl, ranging in age from 12 to 8. Dinner included turkey with all the trimmings and fine wine. Afterwards, there was a gift exchange, and the girl handed Berent and Lankenau Parker pen and pencil sets. The two thanked the family and were chauffeured back to their ship, which attracted the attention of the crew.

"We came aboard and told of our good fortune, and there was envy. I said, 'See, if you guys went to church instead of the gin mills, you too might have been invited,'" Berent recalls.



Clemence M. Berent (right) and Willis Lankenau had their picture taken by a family who invited them to Christmas dinner in the family's Diamond Head home in 1944.



On one of her many wartime tours, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visits Christmas Island on Christmas day in 1942 and was photographed by Gus Mitchell.

Christmas on Christmas

GUS MITCHELL'S 1942 Christmas on Christmas Island was spent as a medic with a detachment of infantry at a remote post where his chief activity was shark fishing. He recorded two holiday visitors.

"On Christmas Day we had a surprise visit from Eleanor Roosevelt. She was to tour the island to find out how the morale of the men was holding up. She

found out in a hurry it was pretty low," Mitchell, now a resident of Richmond, Ind., recalls. "On Christmas we didn't have any bright lights, bells, Christmas trees or a big dinner or gift exchange."

Mitchell, then a technical sergeant, recalls without other comment, a "great, tasty" Christmas dinner which consisted of horsemeat patties, dehydrated potatoes, bread and coffee. There was no

dessert nor toast to the occasion, but perhaps that was the result of the other visit.

"Our Christmas dinner was interrupted when we were alerted that a Japanese sub had surfaced and was observing the island. We were ordered not to fire on the sub and give away the locations of our positions. Our outdoor movie was 'White Christmas' starring Bing Crosby. I was wondering if Eleanor Roosevelt was enjoying horsemeat patties for her Christmas dinner," Mitchell writes.

After his tour on Christmas Island, Mitchell participated in the invasions of Eniwetok and Saipan as a combat medic. He was awarded two Purple Hearts and two Bronze Stars, and his wounds from the Saipan battle required a 15-month convalescence.

"The war was over for me, but Christmas Island still remains in memory."



"Some of the boys," writes Gus Mitchell, holding up one of the sharks he caught on Christmas Island in the south Pacific in 1942. Don't ever think, Mitchell advises, that Christmas Island means heaven or paradise.

Monkey & Mistletoe

HE DIDN'T have a red nose, and he was a primate rather than a reindeer. Nonetheless, an example of Southeast Asian wildlife managed to bring some Christmas cheer to Marines stationed in Vietnam during Christmas 1967.

Lester E. Sellers of Johnstown, Pa., recalls sharing his "hootch" with the visiting monkey during that Yuletide season. "He lived with us for only a short while. He really helped us forget where we were—only for a short while. Even though he ate the cookies and treats our parents, girlfriends and wives sent us, he was still OK."

While one might expect such a Christmas visitor to be comfortable in and around trees, this one took every opportunity to knock over the decorated tree sent by Sellers' parents.

"We all took our turns setting it back up. Maybe he was trying to tell us something, not only about Christmas but all the time, 'Don't forget about loved ones; they don't forget you.'"



A small visitor to Marines stationed in Vietnam eyes the Christmas tree, which he often knocked to the floor while keeping his human comrades amused during a lonely Christmas 31 years ago.

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Gift of Life

INFANTRY of Patton's third Army near Pratz, Luxembourg, had a few moments of precious quiet on a cold Christmas Eve in 1944. They had just completed an attack on German positions when a U.S. bomber flew over American positions.

Keith D. Pregler of Bulverde, Texas, a former member of G Company who found himself in this spot on the Bulge, remembers seeing the smoke and parachutes trailing from the crippled plane.

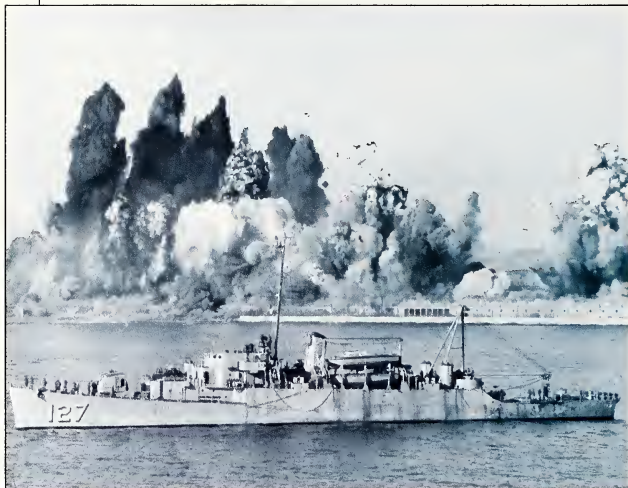
"One of the crew landed in a tree halfway between U.S. and German lines. he popped his reserve chute and used it to climb down to the ground... All this activity was clearly visible to the Germans, who were not far away. They did nothing; not a shot, not a mortar. Unfortunately, I do not know what happened to the remainder of the crew. This was one very lucky airman with only some scratches and bruises.

"In reality, we were all very lucky that day because the Germans allowed [us to go collect the airman]. We were bunched up and exposed, making an easy target for several minutes. Maybe it was Christmas..."



Members of the 26th Infantry Division retrieve a crew member (among the group of men to the left) of an Army Air Corps light bomber shot down as it targeted German positions in the "Bulge" during Christmas 1944.

COURTESY OF KEITH D. PREGLER



COURTESY OF BOB MITCHELL

Munitions and supplies at the Hungnam, Korea, beachhead are blown up on Christmas Eve 1949 to prevent the enemy from capturing them.

Evacuation: a Holiday Blast

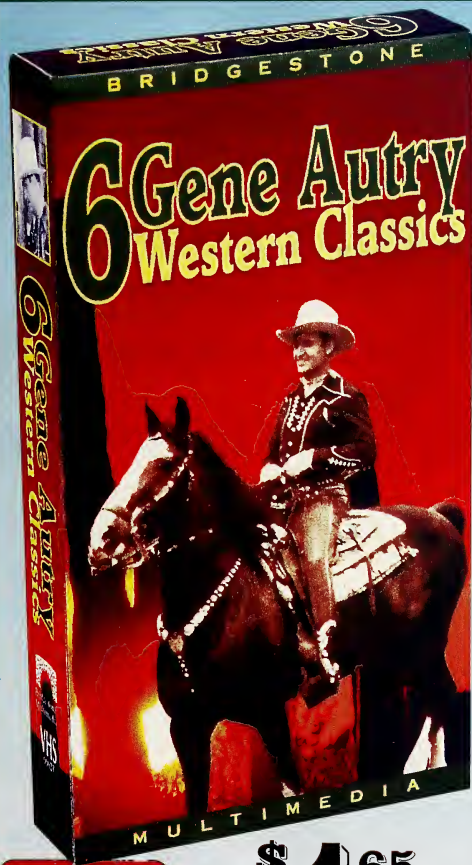
IN THE WEEKS before Christmas 1949, United Nations forces established a beachhead at Hungnam, Korea, as a way for the First Marine Division to evacuate after fighting their way from the Chosin Reservoir area.

Bob Mitchell, who served as a Navy journalist during the Korean War covering amphibious forces, remembered naval power keeping the North Korean forces from overrunning the beach until the Marines arrived.

"Finally, on Christmas Eve, action shown in this photograph took place on ammunition and supplies that could not be removed due to the lack of ships."

An underwater demolition team planted explosives creating, in Mitchell's words, "One big bang for the holiday."

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Busy Ship Takes Time for Christmas

FOR THE CREW of a busy destroyer, USS Brown, no Christmas trees were provided in 1943 or 1944, but, as Stan Norris writes, "There was a feast fit for a king given us on each 25th. The meal was capped off with a big, fat cigar to enjoy."

"The 1943 copy of 'morning orders' found us supporting operations near Kavieng [a New Guinea port on Balgai Bay]. As our air groups pounded targets at that location, we squeezed in the meal later that day," says Norris, now of Coronado, Calif.

Among the day's official messages was one from the Pacific Fleet's commander-in-chief. It cited that comfort in this Christmas far from home and loved ones contained the comfort that the distance also measured the success of their efforts to guard homes and loved ones.



In Buckner Bay, Okinawa, part of the USS Brown bridge crew takes time to pose for a photo at the splinter shield. The war-time heraldry displays the ship's combat record.

Yule Remember This One

AFTER MY INDUCTION into the Army in 1942, I was always assigned to the 14th Tank Battalion, 9th Armored Division," writes Paul J. Bouda of Boca Raton, Fla. "When the Battle of the Bulge started on Dec. 16, 1944, we were assembled in the vicinity of Ligneuville, Belgium, approximately eight miles north of St. Vith. At 1730 hours, our combat units moved south and east to the area of Brietfeld, Belgium, and Steinbrück and Eicherath, Germany, where we made contact with the enemy."

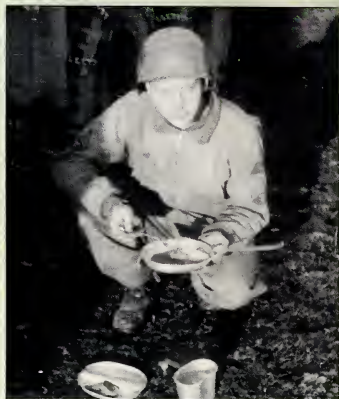
"For the next five days, we defend-

ed the area in and around St. Vith. On Dec. 22, we were at Neübrück, Belgium, approximately two miles southeast. For the next two days, we were a holding force through Salem Chateau, Viesalm and Liernaux.

"On Christmas Eve, 1944, our unit was caught in a severe cross-fire in the Manhay-Bra area on the way to Werbomont, Belgium, where we were taken out of action and given our first 'hot' meal in nine days.

"Our Christmas dinner that year consisted of dehydrated potatoes, a pork chop, peas and a peach. It was all mixed up in the mess kit, and by the time we got to eat, it was cold.

"At each of the 53 Christmas dinners I have had since, I have always given thanks for what we have on the table."



TSgt. Paul J. Bouda's camera recorded him confronting Christmas dinner in 1944 after nine days in action in the Battle of the Bulge. Some of the members of his battalion's support elements were victims in the Malmédy massacre.

"God Got Us Together One Last Time"

I JOINED the Navy in 1942 and volunteered for submarine service. My brother Mark, who was two years younger, joined the Marine Corps the following year. In 1944, my youngest brother was drafted into the Army," writes A. Allen Lankford, Sharptown, Md.

"At Christmas, my ship was in Key West, and I had a few days' leave. My Marine brother, Mark, was in North Carolina... My youngest brother, Scott, had

just finished his Army training was to be sent to Europe in January.

"We lived in a small town in Maryland, so I took the bus to Washington, D.C., to take a bus for the 150-mile trip home. After buying a ticket, I saw a Marine in the lobby; it was my brother going home. After our hellos, we got on the bus, and there was our younger brother, going home for Christmas..."

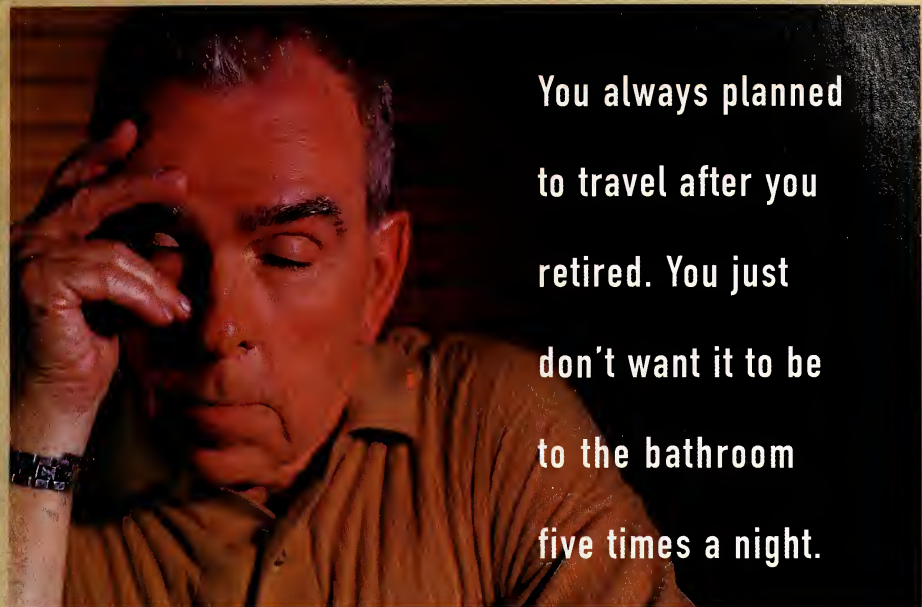
"Christmas 1944 was a wonderful

joining with family and friends – for the last time. After a few days of hunting and visiting, we departed. It was a tearful but wonderful goodbye."

"My Marine brother was sent to Okinawa. My Army brother was sent to Europe where he was killed in action in Germany on Feb. 22. Scott was only 18 years old. It seems as though God got us together one last time, because I had been scheduled to take my leave at New Year's."



The brothers Lankford pose in front of their home during Christmas leave in 1944. The youngest, Scott (right), would be killed in action in Germany less than two months later.



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Resurrecting Europe

The Marshall Plan looked to be a hard sell—and then The American Legion got involved.



By Michael D. Kanner



May 8, 1945. Bells rang; the people rejoiced and offered prayers of thanksgiving. VE Day marked the destruction of a cruel empire that subjugated its citizens and conquered, enslaved and murdered millions of others.

The defeat of Nazi Germany left Europe in ashes and with little hope.

Dec. 31, 1991. The Cold War ended when the Soviet Union collapsed. With it went the rusty, unfulfilled promises of communism. Like the Nazis, the Soviets enslaved their own people and those they conquered—a failed totali-

tarian "utopia."

Two wars, two similar outcomes. But winning the peace in the second scenario remains to be seen. The wars differed—the first hot, the second cold. The world united against the Nazis while many sought accommodation with the Soviets. However, there is one common truth: At the end of each, the United States was left as the world's leader. After World War II, we took the lead and established conditions to guarantee peace and safety in Western Europe. At the end of the Cold War, it is time to include the rest of Europe.

The American Legion was among the first to urge the United States to secure the victory and confirm its leadership. This included early support of the United Nations and pushing for a cooperative security system in Western Europe. U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall's plan to rebuild Europe fit perfectly. In a June 1947 speech at Harvard, he said it was time to break "...the vicious circle and restore the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole." Recovery would grow with unity and

trade, not simple to accomplish. First, assistance from the winning side was unprecedented. International custom held that victors imposed tribute. Second, the devastation of almost every industrialized country meant the United States would go it alone.

The prospect of instability convinced Marshall and President Harry Truman that U.S. security required an economically healthy Western Europe. A hungry, suffering electorate might elect communist or fascist governments, overturning hard-won battlefield victories. Marshall, who was the Army chief of staff during the war, saw that Stalin was anticipating Europe's economic collapse and the revolutions predicted by Lenin and Trotsky.

Marshall's idea, however, drew criticism across the political spectrum. The left called it a provocation and an outrage. Conservatives feared the cost would bankrupt the treasury. Isolationists called for the United States' withdrawal from Europe, as they had after World War I. To build support, Marshall called on leading figures in business and govern-

Michael D. Kanner retired from the Army as senior analyst, plans division, operations directorate in Europe. He teaches college courses in American foreign policy and is Sgt.-at-Arms at American Legion Post 32, Longmont, Colo.



World War II left all Europe devastated. The Cold War left Eastern Europe blighted and bankrupt.

ment. To answer isolationist and conservative critics, Truman and Marshall sought support from a group with unimpeachable credentials, a group whose members not only had proven their patriotism, but also had a profound interest in world peace. Truman, a long-time Legionnaire from Missouri, realized they needed veterans' support. They called on The American Legion, whose support of the Marshall Plan grew from three foreign policy goals: To block communist expansion, to prevent World War III and to rehabilitate Europe.

In his 1948 testimony to Congress, National Commander James O'Neil restated the position adopted by the Legion at its 29th National Convention:

"This is a crucial hour in foreign relations of the United States. The international situation calls for steadiness, firmness and far-reaching decisions...The only way to prevent wars in a critical situation such as exists in

Europe today is to act firmly, promptly, and adequately—without bluster but with complete readiness if war should be forced upon us."

O'Neil emphasized the resolution came from members of whom "a great proportion...have fought in Europe and in the two world wars. Their battles either saved or liberated the people of Europe from tyranny."

The point was clear to the committee: The American Legion was a grassroots organization whose members knew war's violence and saw the Marshall Plan as insurance against another, more terrible war. In March 1948, Congress overwhelmingly agreed and Truman signed the European Recovery Plan on April 3.

The Marshall Plan remains the best example of foreign aid success. Winston Churchill called it "the most unsordid act in history." Both the political goal of containing communism and the economic goal of restoring Europe



STATESMEN

George Marshall, architect of the European Recovery Plan, conferred often with Winston Churchill, who called the plan 'the most unsordid act in history.'

BACK AT WORK

Europeans found work on many projects financed by the Marshall Plan, from clearing rubble to building new factories.

HISTORY'S VERDICT

East German border guards (far left) continue to hold their post as the wall they guarded comes down.

were met. By the plan's conclusion in 1952, European industrial production was 200 percent over prewar levels. The plan cost the United States \$13.4 billion, less than 2 percent of one year's GNP in 1947.

Although economic success would be reason enough to laud the Marshall Plan, it also provided the framework for breaking a cycle of war whose roots went back 300 years. A Marshall Plan instrument, the Committee of European Economic Cooperation, was the first case of European states uniting for a common good, rather than against a common enemy. In it began the partnership that became the European Union. As Europe came to see that more was to be gained through cooperation, the continent was set on a path that would make war unthinkable.

Thanks to the Marshall Plan, Western Europe joined the United States in the post-war recovery, and its people enjoyed levels of prosperity and freedom few had imagined possible. As their economies grew, Europeans bought both American goods and American ideals of democracy.

Achievement of the political goals indicates Marshall intuitively under-

Resurrecting Europe



FALLEN HERO
Lenin's monument is loaded onto a truck after being toppled in Lithuania.

If the people of Eastern Europe and Russia cannot see that they are better under democracy than under communism, they will call for a return to communism.

stood what has since been called the Democratic Peace Proposition, which postulates that democracies do not fight each other. Marshall also understood that trade expansion favors peace. Mutually beneficial trade gives each country a stake in the success of others. These two effects exert a greater pacifying influence than any imaginable army of occupation.

Consider the end of the Cold War. As did Nazism, communism left whole regions devastated. The question now is whether those regions should be left to their own devices. Leading countries, including the United States, must realize that recovery requires action of the type, if not of the magnitude, of the Marshall Plan in rebuilding economies and infrastructure. Unlike the cradle days of the Marshall Plan, the United States will not have to go it alone. States such as Germany, once the beneficiary of American generosity, are helping fel-

low Europeans ensure their new democracies meet basic needs for political and economic reform.

The French statesman Talleyrand was quoted as telling Marshal Ney (Napoleon's premier marshal) "When my profession fails, yours has to come to the rescue." Surely, war is too costly to let politicians and diplomats fail. When few American leaders look beyond our borders, The American Legion must lead in developing policies to prevent wars and complete the Cold War victory. NATO's expansion provides the security to build democratic states; it will take a Marshall Plan to ensure political and economic stability.

In his history of The American Legion, Raymond Moley noted, "It is to the Legion's enduring credit that it has exercised through years of alarm, provocation and stress a steady leadership in meeting the challenge this nation faces... It has done this when it was unpopular to do so, placing the interests

of men who strive to remain free alongside those of Americans."

Fifty years ago, we extended a helping hand, the Marshall Plan, to the people of war-ravaged Western Europe. We helped feed and clothe them; we gave them a sense of purpose and a future. And led by The American Legion, we imparted to them the ideal that freedom hates a wall, and, if given a chance, it will pierce an iron curtain of despair. Can our obligation be any less today? □

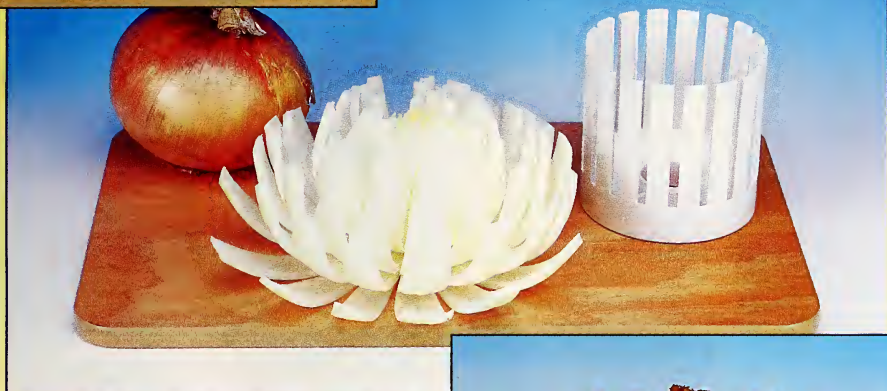


MAN FROM MISSOURI
President Truman, a long-time Legion member, called on veterans to support the Marshall Plan.

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MILLER HIGHLIGHTS VETERANS' CONCERNS

Butch Miller sets the record straight on tobacco-related claims and a just and lasting budget for veterans' health-care programs.

By Joe Stuteville

ON CAPITOL HILL there's no shortage of rhetoric, but when you're talking about veterans' programs, there are certain words or labels a lawmaker should never bring up—especially when talking to a crowded room of Legionnaires.

Rep. John Cooksey of Louisiana found that out when he described appropriated veterans' health-care benefits as a "handout" during National Commander Butch Miller's testimony before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees, Oct. 6. That one word drew grumbling from many of the 200-plus Legion leaders and Auxiliary members in the hearing room.

Cooksey was indirectly referring to projected VA money "saved" from a slick congres-



JOHN E. SHOWN

sional move this summer that diverted an estimated \$17 billion to improve national roads and transportation systems.

Cooksey, a Republican who serves on the House Veterans' Affairs committee, said that about \$1.6 billion was earmarked to improve VA medical services. And his remarks drew a stinging, speedy rebuke from Miller and some of the lawmaker's colleagues.

"The only handout veterans of this country have ever asked for is a hand from their buddies when they get knocked down," Miller said, referring to the assistance given by The American Legion to veterans seeking compensation.

"The American Legion appreciates the need



JOHN E. SHOWN

REP. JOHN COOKSEY'S comment that recent appropriations for veterans' programs were a "handout" drew a fast response from the commander, who said: "The only handout veterans... have ever asked for is a hand from their buddies when they get knocked down."

to have good roads in this country, Congressman, we just want to make sure that when veterans drive on these good roads to VA medical centers—some of them hundreds of miles from their homes—that they receive good and timely health care," Miller said, drawing loud applause from Legion family members and some of the congressmen.

Rep. Bob Filner, Democrat from California, also clearly was irritated with Cooksey's choice of words. "I'm appalled to hear anything that describes any kind of veterans' benefits as a handout," he said. "These benefits have been earned, and often at a high price."

The tobacco issue flared earlier this year when Congress repealed a 1993 VA General Counsel ruling that held the VA should pay compensation and provide health care to veterans who became addicted to tobacco in the military and who later developed related illnesses

Joe Stuteville's profile on National Commander Butch Miller appeared in the October issue.

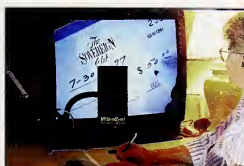
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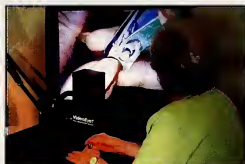
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COMMANDER'S TESTIMONY



ON THE HILL Miller, joined by National Legislative Commission Chairman Charles Pessio (left), makes a strong pitch for the GI Bill of Health.

A Pitch For 2000

BELOW is a breakdown of what The American Legion proposes for VA's budget in Fiscal Year 2000, which begins Oct. 1, 1999:

Area	Amount
Medical Care	\$19.5 billion
Construction	
Major	\$200 million
Minor	\$200 million
State Veterans' Home Programs	\$100 million
Medical, Prosthetic Research	\$335 million
National Cemetery System	\$105 million
Veterans Benefits Administration	\$877 million
(general operating expenses; includes additional full-time employees and pension service)	

and conditions.

"For generations, the use of tobacco products by service members was very much a part of the military culture," Miller said. "For Congress to make this critical decision without the benefit of congressional hearings, involving the veterans' community, deeply concerns the Legion."

Miller, who retired a year ago from his top-level position in the VA's General Counsel office, described the counsel's 1993 criteria for eligibility as "fair and equitable," given that the approval rate for tobacco-related claims is less than 8 percent.

"Veterans who now become ill or die from tobacco-related illnesses are being unfairly penalized for the sake of politics and budgetary expediency," the commander said. "The

American Legion, I can assure you, is committed to right the injustice that has been done to veterans, their families and their survivors."

The Legion further proposes the federal government has a responsibility to pursue a comprehensive settlement with tobacco companies to secure the funds to allow the VA to cover the costs of medical care, compensation and survivors' benefits for disability and deaths related to tobacco use.

Congress must bear the blame for turning its back on veterans with tobacco claims. "Let's be honest," said Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, a Texas Democrat. "We haven't done right by veterans, and part of the responsibility of Congress is to make good on the promise to help veterans with their medical needs. I urge The American Legion to continue to confront us when we haven't done our jobs."

With the future of veterans' needs in mind, Miller reminded lawmakers that funding of VA health care continues to be the most critical issue at hand. In recent years, the Legion has made, and continues to make, strong pitches for new ways to generate money streams for the VA; however, the Legion is concerned that veterans' health care is still budget-driven rather than needs-driven.

"VA is creating all of the necessary components needed to reduce significantly the level of care provided [to veterans], while dramatically downsizing the department's health-care network," Miller said. "Although the VA continues to emulate managed-care medicine, there is one significant difference between the VA and other managed-care organizations: There is very little revenue generated from non-appropriated revenue sources."

The solution? The Legion's landmark GI Bill of Health would expand access and guarantee a full range of medical care to veterans and their dependents. Under this plan, military retirees and their families also would be served.

"At the time of enrollment, veterans and their dependents could identify a funding source to finance their treatment, whether it's private insurance, Medicare or Medicaid," Miller said. "Service-connected veterans and other priority veterans could identify the VA as the source."

The GI Bill of Health would create a network of federal, state and private health-care providers in partnership with the medical industry.

To that end, the Legion supports the development of a GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century. This covenant, Miller explained, should focus on health care and benefit claims, the home-loan guaranty program, Small Business Administration loans, education benefits, burial benefits and transition assistance programs.

Miller also focused on the obstacles faced by ailing veterans who suffer from Gulf War illnesses. He chided the government for dragging its feet on providing access to health care for Gulf veterans suffering from GWI. He said that a legislative proposal, House Resolution 3980, would help overcome barriers to care and would enable the VA to "effectively treat" illnesses. The bill, if enacted, will create a National Center on War-Related Illnesses and implement policies before they are needed by veterans of future wars.

The commander's testimony capped an intense three-day American Legion summit in a city consumed by presidential impeachment hearings and Congress' last-minute shuffling to forge a national budget.

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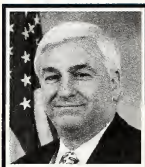
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SHOULD U.S. TROOPS BEGIN WITHDRAWING FROM BOSNIA?

Rep. Allen Boyd Jr. (R—Florida)



NO Earlier this year, I joined nine of my House colleagues on a trip to Bosnia—Herzegovina. I received briefings regarding America's presence in that region, but I still had questions about whether the United States should continue to participate in peacekeeping efforts in the region.

All of us have seen photographs of the destruction that conflict has wrought. It is difficult to imagine how a place that hosted the Winter Olympics just 14 years ago could be reduced to a site of burned homes, crumbling streets and charred remains of businesses.

Even more difficult to understand is that the sentiments which led to this are still alive in the minds of people in this region. During a visit to a resettlement camp, the delegation met with both Bosnians and Serbs. In 15 minutes, a seemingly positive dialogue turned into a shouting match. These arguments are not merely based on war-time disputes, but are born of an ethnic and religious rivalry that has existed for hundreds of years and, today, still permeates every facet of life in this region. The potential for conflict weighs heavily.

To counter this threat, the United States has been participating in peacekeeping efforts. The basic mission is to prevent further armed conflict in Bosnia. But during my trip, I began to understand our greater purpose: to prevent war.

During the war, thousands fled their homeland. Should war return to Bosnia, the presence of refugees throughout Europe, combined with the economic and financial interests that European nations and America have vested in this region, could cause this conflict to spread.

Our stake in this—and the need for our nation to assist in preventing another war—has become clear. The United States is the only superpower, and with that comes a responsibility to protect international peace. Americans gave their lives for this peace; we owe it to those who died, and to their children, to protect it.

Our presence has been key. While resettling displaced Bosnians and Serbs in their home territories is challenging, the people have hope that war is over. Residents are beginning to rebuild, refugees are returning home, and businesses are making a comeback. Our soldiers are in Bosnia because U.S. citizens have a stake in whether democracy succeeds or fails. We must recognize that failure is tantamount to war.

Our troops in Bosnia are under complete U.S. control and command, and they have been deployed for a worthy cause. □

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas)



YES On May 6, after my seventh trip to the Balkans, I introduced legislation to curtail the commitment of U.S. ground forces there. What I saw was a well-trained, professional force capable of performing any mission assigned. But I also saw a force with no clear direction and no defined exit strategy.

Bosnia was to be a temporary mission—not a permanent assignment. When Congress narrowly voted to support this mission in 1995, I voted against it because I was afraid this would happen. My reservations turned out to be justified. This was sold to Congress as a one-year commitment. That deadline was missed, and the next deadline was missed as well. It is clear we are involved in an ongoing mission with no end in sight. It is time to set a schedule and begin an orderly, honorable withdrawal of U.S. ground forces.

Our former secretary of defense and the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff both told Congress before the original deployment that an exit strategy is important if we are going to avoid "mission creep." Mission creep means our forces are asked to undertake inappropriate tasks. Increasingly, our forces in Bosnia are carrying out police activities.

This is not fair to our soldiers, and it is not fair to the American people. U.S. forces in Bosnia have accomplished the military mission assigned them. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for accomplishing this with no combat loss of life to any American. But we are losing trained men and women because year after year they're being asked to leave their families, too often for these non-traditional operations. We are wearing out our troops on missions that reduce readiness and cost money that should go toward modernization.

Gradually, we are putting ourselves—and rest of the world—in peril. The United States can respond in situations where our allies cannot or will not. We cannot allow that capability to be eroded.

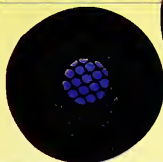
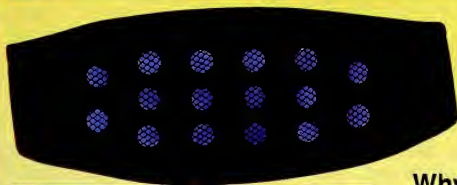
The bill I introduced sets a timetable for reducing the level of U.S. troops, 8,500 of whom are deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Our European allies could gradually take over those responsibilities. In late April, Congress approved an additional \$478.8 million to sustain our forces in Bosnia. Of course we are going to provide our troops with the support they need to do the job—but the money must come from somewhere. Right now it is coming out of future readiness, missile defense and modernization. We are borrowing from the future to pay for a mission others could perform. This is unwise and imprudent. And in the long run, this will not serve our national interests. □

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Employment Bill Works Well for Vets

THE door of opportunity has just swung open for veterans seeking federal jobs or protection from reductions in force, thanks to legislation passed in the waning hours of the 105th Congress.

The House of Representatives on Oct. 8 cleared legislation to expand veterans' preference in federal employment. The bill, **S 1021**, was awaiting the president's signature as this issue went to press.

On the House side, a similar measure, **H 240**, sponsored by Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., was introduced nearly two years ago. Last April, the bill was referred to the Senate, where it was sponsored by Senators Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., and Max Cleland, D-Ga. The bill clarifies a policy that provides assistance mostly to combat and disabled veterans in obtaining and keeping federal employment.

"While it doesn't guarantee anyone a job, this legislation does allow those who have served in uniform to have their service recognized as they are considered along with others when applying for federal jobs," says Hagel, a Vietnam War veteran.

The bill adds points to a veteran's civil-service examination and gives a veteran more time to learn a new job when a veteran-held federal job is eliminated. It also extends the policy to

most non-political federal positions, including those at the General Accounting Office and in the legislative and judicial branches of government.

Currently, only the executive branch uses the veterans' preference guidelines.

The need for the legislation was obvious. The American Legion contends. When a federal job opens, the relevant hiring office is sent a list of qualified applicants. The GAO found that 71 percent of the referral lists were returned without a hire when a veteran's name was at the top.

"By contrast," Hagel adds, "only 51 percent of nonveterans lists are returned. Not only are veterans not getting the preference that statutes require, but all too often veterans are less likely than other applicants to be hired for a federal job."

The American Legion has testified on behalf of the veterans' preference legislation several times over the last two years. In fact, the Legion was the architect of 1944 veterans' employment preference legislation intended to help service members returning from World War II.

"This is a major victory for the veterans' community," says National Commander Butch Miller. "This legislation was necessary to help America's most deserving and self-sacrificing citizens."

New Defense Agency

The reality is chilling enough: At least 25 countries now have or are developing nuclear, biological or chemical weapons and the means to deliver them. In response, the Department of Defense has established the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

"We must confront these threats in places like Baghdad before they come to our shores," says Defense Secretary William Cohen. The DTRA comprises more than 2,000 employees from Cohen's office, the Defense Technology Security Administration, the Defense Special Weapons Agency and the On-Site Inspection Agency.

DTRA is responsible for technology security, cooperative threat-reduction programs, arms control treaty monitoring, on-site inspection and force protection against the threat of weapons of mass destruction. It will be headquartered near Dulles International Airport in the Washington, D.C., area.

"The American Legion believes establishment of the DTRA holds the possibility for improved preparedness and better addresses terrorist threats the United States and its allies face around the globe," says Allen L. Titus, chairman of the Legion's National Security Commission.

Getting Computers Ready

Key issues in preparing the VA's computers for the "Y2K" problems anticipated in 2000 remain unresolved, says a recent General Accounting Office report.

Many computer systems use only the last two digits of dates and, as a result, could interpret the end of the century as "1900" rather than "2000." Observers predict that if computer systems and networks aren't corrected for this change, it could create massive problems in processing veterans' disability compensation and pension checks.

The GAO report says the VA's Veterans Benefits Administration lags in renovating the software which processes benefits and updates benefit information. The report further claims the Veterans Health Administration has yet to gauge its readiness for Y2K.

The GAO recommends the secretary of Veterans Affairs, with the support of VBA and VHA officials, establish "business continuity" and contingency plans to meet possible Y2K disruptions.

The VBA reportedly has completed renovating two critical missions—vocational rehabilitation and insurance—and is partially complete on other systems. But the GAO reports the VBA has made

little progress on compensation and pension software applications.

The report further finds the VHA has assessed and renovated many of its information systems. However, it still needs to make its systems compatible with systems in VA medical facilities, such as heating, ventilating, air conditioning and medical devices, all of which could be affected in a Y2K crisis. GAO says there could be disruptions in patient care at VA medical facilities if computer systems are not upgraded in time.

The VA, however, insists that it's on schedule to meet the Y2K crisis. The department reports it has renovated 94 percent of the more than 300 applications it uses to support compensation, pensions and medical information. Further, VA officials say, they have implemented 61 percent of the applications and anticipate the process will be complete by spring 1999.

"Veterans can rest assured that the VA will provide timely benefit payments and high quality health care without interruption," says Harold Gracey, acting assistant secretary of the VA's Office of Information. □

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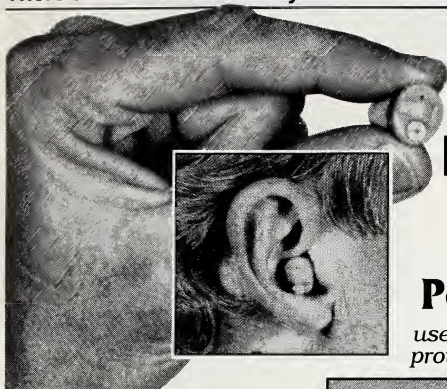
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by Martin Howard

For the last couple of years, I've constantly had to ask people to repeat what they just said to me... I've turned up the volume on the TV so loud that everyone in the house complains... and my wife and children tell me that I'm speaking too loud.

Naturally, I've denied everything. I didn't want to admit I knew that I was having a slight hearing problem. I was hoping it would go away, all by itself, without doing anything about it! But, deep down inside, I knew I needed a little extra help in the hearing department, and lately, I needed this extra help more and more.

My wife was so tired of me asking her to either speak louder or repeat everything she said. We were having arguments over my hearing. Finally, she insisted that I get some help. She told me to buy a hearing aid.

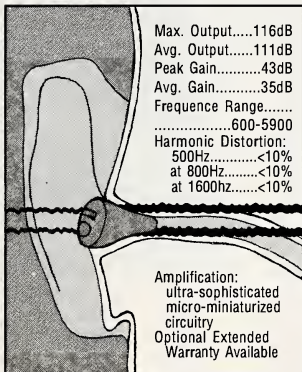
Sure, just what I need. A bulky, ugly, ill-fitting and heavy hearing aid sitting behind my ear. And, the darn thing will probably rub the skin off my ear too!

She laughed at me. No, it's nothing like that - science and technology have revolutionized the audio industry. The product I'm talking about is called **MaxiSound**. It's a personal amplifier and is very different from the hearing aids you are describing.

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MaxiSound worked so well for me that I am now marketing them direct to the consumer. And, I know that they'll work for you too! *It's great to be able to hear the TV clearly again.*

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Tennessee Cemetery Pavilion Dedicated

AFTER nine years and a half-million donated dollars, evidence that Tennesseans honor sacrifices of U.S. veterans graces the gateway to the graves of thousands who, since 1882, have been laid to rest in the National Cemetery near Chattanooga.

Thanks to the work of local Legionnaires, a pavilion in honor of the men and women of the five armed services was dedicated and completed at the cemetery on Veterans Day 1997. The stone and concrete Armed Services Pavilion stands near the historic cemetery's Peace Arch at the original south entrance.

Before the pavilion was built, funerals often were delayed because the cemetery lacked an appropriate shelter from rain. The pavilion, featuring a slate roof, allows ceremonies to go on without threat from inclement weather and provides a powerful backdrop for patriotic ceremonies. It can accommodate as many as 150 people.

Work began in 1989 to raise money for the project as a determined group of Chattanooga Legionnaires went about navigating the federal bureaucracy to allow their community's tribute to be donated to the National Cemetery Service.

"People from Washington said it was a wonderful idea," recalled Carl Levi during the pavilion's dedication. But National Cemetery System officials weren't sure they could accept the gift, because no other community had ever tried to deliver such a project.

Levi, of Chattanooga Post 14 and vice-chairman of the National Finance Commission, also serves his city as

treasurer. He was a member of the Chattanooga Area Veterans' Council, an organization of 33 veterans groups, where the idea for the pavilion originated.

One day Levi received a phone call from a committee member, who had attended a meeting he had missed.

"He said, 'since you weren't there you were elected chairman,'" Levi remembers.

"What do I have to do?" Levi asked.

"Not much," came the reply, "You only have to raise about \$150,000 and build a pavilion."

"I didn't know how to do that," Levi recalls, but the retired Army National Guard brigadier general learned fast. Those on the committee to build the pavilion included Chattanooga Legionnaires Bob Lahiere, Post 14, chairman of the Veterans Council and a member of the National Executive Committee; Harold Wilson and Dick Clarke, both of Post 14; Joe W. Young, Post 95, Past Department Commander; Ernest Seagle, Post 95, and Chattanooga National Cemetery Administrator James H. Wallace III, Post 95.

Levi made three trips to Washington to request money from Congress for the project. "I was always treated very kindly, certainly, but there just weren't any funds," he says. "They thanked us and told us it was a good idea."

Back home, the afternoon Chattanooga Free Press and staff writer Michael Finn supported the project and got the



DAY OF HONOR Dignitaries, including then-Gov. Don Sundquist of Tennessee and Lt. Gen. John M. Pickler (standing at podium) were on hand for the culmination of years of work—the dedication of the Armed Forces Pavilion at the National Cemetery in Chattanooga.

word out about the need for financial help. An anonymous citizen of Chattanooga came through with a \$300,000 donation, but the committee remained \$200,000 short of being able to do the job right.

Because Hamilton County, Tenn., receives about \$70,000 a year in hotel and motel taxes from cemetery visitors, county commissioners were able to promise additional project funding. Once the promise of that money came through, plans for the pavilion could be completed.

But construction couldn't start until a letter of determination was received by the IRS, which took some pushing by Sen. Fred Thompson's staff in order to assure the pavilion would be ready by Veterans Day 1997.

Since the pavilion's dedication, the city of Chattanooga has contributed \$20,000 for landscaping, flag poles and a small lake in the pavilion area. Plans are being made to build two seven-foot columns on each side of the pavilion. Bronze eagles will

be placed atop each.

Appropriately, Levi returned to the Pavilion this Veterans Day, where he received the Legion of Merit, one of the highest peacetime honors the Army can bestow. The award recognizes Levi's 1986 work as 196th Field Artillery Brigade commander, helping South Carolina and Tennessee National Guardsmen develop a training evaluation program. The program, now widely used, was so effective that after its implementation Guardsmen were able to out shoot regular Army units in competitions conducted in Germany.

He also has a drill hall named after him in Chattanooga. "It's the only one in the state of Tennessee named for someone still alive," he says.

He is now applying his project expertise directly at his local Post. Levi has helped raise more than \$500,000 for a new Post home to be built next year in downtown Chattanooga.

—David Penticuff

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This month there are 147 military reunions listed on these pages. In addition, VETS has information on more than 12,000 other reunions. Call weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Central time. Normal long-distance charges apply.

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ARMY AIR FORCE

147th Engr Div (WWII) #15907
6th AF 20th Tn Sgdn (Panama) #16875
8th AF 2nd Air Div Asso (Fl. Chapl) #19111
8th AF 38th Bomb Grp (Fl. CTO, WWII) #15980
13th AF 4th Recon Sgdn, 34th Bomb Sgdn (Pac-Is) #22144
10th Air Depot Grp, Hq & Repair Sgdn #16908
24th Central Postal Dir, Hq #11023
78th Ft Sgdn (WWII) #16709
28th Bomb Grp, 1st 42-43-44th Sgdn #16939
342nd Bomb Grp, 336-337-338-339 Sgdn #16939
WWII #16965
50th AAA Bn (Fl. Hq) #17100
Morre ARPS, 8-24-29 pilots/crew (WWII) #16938
38th Recon Sgdn, 1st 42-43-44th Sgdn (anyone involved) #23845
Pilot USAF (WWII commands) #16822
Santa Ana Army Air Base Wing (WWII) #16719

AIR FORCE

2nd Radio Sgdn (NM) (Darmstadt, GE) 55-55 #23662
71st Bomb Grp, 8201th Bomb Sgdn #13402
12th Tn, 1st Wing, 3911/557H-559th Sgdn (NM) #16907
22nd Bomb Sgdn, 19th Bomb Sgdn #15025
6th FS (SS) #19309
1st 51st Recon Wing #20243
314th TFW (48-70) #15009
435th Tn, 1st Wing, 3911/557H-559th Sgdn (NM) #16907
43rd Can. Caribou, (U.S.) #10955
522nd FS (Hillburg & Landstuhl, GE) #15792
190th ACW (RAF Sgdn) (Dobbin, AF, GA) 55-57 #16907
408th Stn Recon Wing (all Sgdn) #15190
Air Weather Asso (incl. AF) #17268
96th B-29 Super (Belmont, AF) #21441
Seawall AF: all pers (48-70) #11922

ARMY

1st Arm Div Asso (WWII) #16907
1st Arm Div, 1st Bn, 1st Sgdn #16907
1st Inf Div Officers, "Big Red One" (all wars) #16907
2nd Arm Div, 17th Engr Bn, C Co (WWII) #16341
2nd Arm Div, 42nd Abn, 8 Co #20216
2nd Infantry Asso (2nd Inf Div, 38th Regt, K Co, WWII) #15827
3rd Arm Div, 125th Arm Div, 1st Bn, C Co (Fl. Knox, 33, locust) #20801
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235th FA Dns Bn #15908
24th FA Bn #16001
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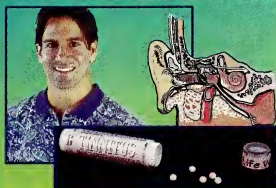
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2. Date of filing: September 29, 1998

3. Frequency of issue: Monthly

A. No. of issues published annually: 12

b. Annual subscription price: \$3.00

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(Marion County)

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business offices of the publisher: 700 North Penn-
sylvania St., Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

6. Names and addresses of publisher, editor and
managing editor:

Publisher: Dick McNally, 700 N. Pennsylvania St.,
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Editor: Joe P. Stuteville, 700 N. Pennsylvania St.,
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B. Paid Circulation 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	5,355 5,396
2. Mail sub- scriptions	2,696,326 2,717,166
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D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means Samples, compli- mentary, and other free copies	3,801 3,830
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G. Total distribution (Sum of C and F)	2,708,481 2,729,392
H. Copies not distributed 1. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	4,007 4,061
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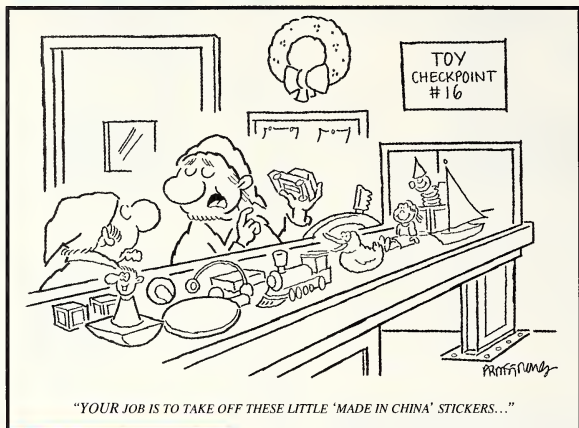
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Christmas:
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and good buys
with friends
and family.

Better Not Pout

You know what a truly frightening Christmas experience is? Take your kids through a toy department any day after Thanksgiving. It's like playing Russian Roulette with your checking account.

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Oh, Christmas Tree

Today's artificial trees are almost too good to be true. They're full, their branches are uniform, their color is good and they're flameproof. But have you ever heard anybody stand next to such a tree, inhale deep and exclaim, "Ahhh... the smell of plastic!"

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Something for all of us to consider: What if we woke up Christmas morning and received everything we truly deserve?

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You know it's Christmas when you see scores of Santas around town. Two shoppers recently were standing outside a department store when a rotund Santa went in one side of the revolving door—and out the other side came a skinny Claus. The one shopper nudged the other and said, "Man, now that's what I really call a diet."

Needle Lift

Even the real Christmas trees were a little disappointing. As I was putting the star on the one in my house, I discovered it wasn't a tree anymore. It was an arch.

Twisted View

Let us recall that not-so-well known Christmas story back in the days when the communists were running the Kremlin. Seems there was a party boss named Rudolf who was staring out the window on a cold, snowy day and remarked, "It's raining."

His wife looked out the window and disagreed. "No, comrade, it's snowing."

Hearing this the party boss gets angry and replies: "It's sunny and warm—and let me remind you that Rudolf the Red knows rain, dear!"

Our Wish for You

And so, as Tiny Tim observed, "God bless us, everyone."

—Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol"



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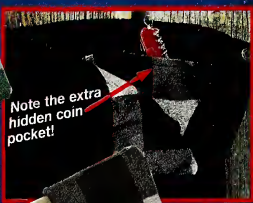


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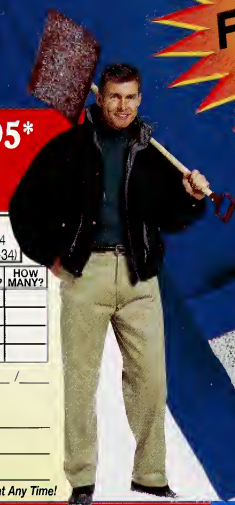
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